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Sixty-first session

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New York

President: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gilles Noghès, chairman of the delegation of the Principality of Monaco.

Mr. Noghès (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): Few women before you, Madam, have been elected to the presidency of the General Assembly, despite the fact that, as the Chinese proverb states, women hold up half the sky. We are delighted by your election and congratulate you and your country, Bahrain. Our congratulations go also to the Group of Asian States, which, happily, put your name forward. You can rest assured that our delegation will always be ready to support you as you carry out you lofty and challenging task.

We would also like to congratulate your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, on having so successfully guided the work of the General Assembly during the previous session, as well as for his understanding of the capacity of Member States to overcome their differences. Because of his perseverance, the majority of the reforms resulting from the commitments entered into at the 2005 World Summit have been implemented.

At the beginning of this debate we heard Mr. Kofi Annan present his report on the work of the Organization (A/61/1) for the last time. He clearly set out for us his beliefs and accomplishments and his recommendations for strengthening the United Nations. My delegation associates itself with the numerous tributes paid to the Secretary-General. We also wish to convey to him our profound gratitude for his courageous efforts over the past 10 years. Thanks to the extensive experience he acquired at the Organization, he was able to move the United Nations forward — in an environment fraught with threats and new challenges — to meet the expectations aroused as a result of the upheavals caused by globalization. His clear vision made it possible to establish the existence of the nexus between peace, development and human rights — Charter principles that have repeatedly underpinned our common efforts.

Guided by the watchful motivation of His Serene Highness Prince Albert II, the Government of Monaco has worked to increase its contribution to development and international cooperation through a significant increase in official development assistance (ODA). In that connection, cooperation credits have increased by 30 per cent in 2006. The Principality will continue its efforts to expeditiously reach the goals set and reaffirmed last year at this very rostrum by H.S.H. the Sovereign Prince.

The advancement of women, improving child and maternal health and the alleviation of poverty are among the Principality's priorities on the international sphere. The Sovereign Prince and his sisters, Princess Caroline of Hanover and Princess Stéphanie of

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Monaco, are greatly involved in development efforts intended to help the most destitute. In her capacity as a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Her Royal Highness the Princess of Hanover is helping to promote programmes to educate girls and women. Part of that effort includes a project undertaken by Monaco, Andorra, Cyprus, Luxembourg and San Marino on the theme of human rights and education in combating poverty and promoting the independence of girls and women.

As President of the World Association of Children's Friends, the Princess has long led an ongoing struggle to protect children. On the recent occasion of being honoured by UNICEF-USA, the Princess of Hanover stated that "today we are at war against terror, especially against the terror in the eyes, hearts and spirits of millions of children around the world".

This session will provide impetus to the effort to promote and protect the rights of children with next October's publication of a study by the independent expert Paulo Pinheiro, to which the Principality is proud to have contributed. Let us not forget that, as Jean-Paul Sartre wrote, violence, regardless of what form it takes, constitutes a failure.

We hope that, following the Security Council's debates on the protection of children in armed conflict, the effective implementation of Council resolution 1620 (2005) will lead to progress in this area of such concern. It is unacceptable in human terms for the perpetrators of such crimes to go unpunished.

During her presence here last June to attend the High-level Meeting on HIV/AIDS, Princess Stéphanie of Monaco expressed her solidarity with all those fighting the disease or otherwise affected. Through her Fight AIDS Monaco association, the Princess is working to promote prevention, research and assistance to those affected by the virus — especially sero-positive people, who are often victims of discrimination. In that regard, the Princess has expressed the wish that the dignity of every sero-positive person be respected. Her association will support the establishment of an entity to provide psychological support for those ill with the disease in an African country where many non-governmental organizations from Monaco have already carried out development efforts.

The upcoming appointment of Princess Stéphanie as a special representative of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) will further strengthen her commitment to the fight against this terrible pandemic, which is increasingly affecting more and more women. To address that situation, the Government of Monaco has decided that, in addition to the support it provides to UNAIDS, it will begin this year to finance a United Nations Population Fund project in Africa focusing mainly on sero-positive women suffering from extreme poverty and psychological distress and providing them with medical, psychological and social assistance.

Our heads of State or Government resolved to take action when they accepted the responsibility to protect. It is of course up to individual States to protect their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. But when such tragic events cannot be prevented, it falls to the international community, working through the United Nations, to be prepared to immediately provide assistance to victims of such acts.

Whether a catastrophe is natural or man-made, it is crucial that we be able to meet the most pressing needs of civilian populations. In that regard, we would like to commend the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator and his Office for their ongoing efforts, especially as regards the restructuring of the Central Emergency Response Fund. Monaco is a contributor to the Fund and intends to continue its efforts to provide financing for humanitarian assistance during the years to come.

Before the end of this year, His Serene Highness Prince Albert II will once again visit the fishing village of Sirombu on Nias Island, Indonesia, which has twice been struck by natural disaster: first by a tidal wave in December 2004 and, a few months later, by an earthquake. The village has been rebuilt thanks to the effective and generous action of the Monaco-Asia Association.

As the Sovereign Prince announced that it would during the 2005 World Summit (see A/60/PV.6), Monaco ratified the Kyoto Protocol last February.

Our head of State has a personal and ongoing commitment to protecting the environment. That commitment was recently evidenced in the polar expedition he undertook 100 years after the one made

by his great-great grandfather, Prince Albert I, a pioneer of modern oceanography. Having reached the North Pole with his team on 16 April 2006, following four days on an arduous course on dog sleds from the Russian base of Barneo, Prince Albert II launched an urgent appeal regarding the dangers of global warming, unfortunately in evidence in the Arctic in the significant shrinking of the ice shelf. Back in Monaco, His Serene Highness established a foundation devoted to environmental preservation and sustainable development that will serve as a permanent source of dynamic and innovative efforts in the areas of climate change, biodiversity loss and water resources. The Principality is also pleased to have been elected to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. We hope to contribute to improving the United Nations environmental machinery.

The Principality of Monaco believes that there is a need to establish and strengthen dialogue among civilizations in order to prevent conflict. We support all efforts aimed at actively promoting a culture of peace and mutual respect among the world's various creeds, cultures and languages. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated in 1999, "The greater the appreciation of diversity, the deeper the sense of identity and the sounder the enlargement of the common denominator of values" (A/54/546, para. 13).

It is in that spirit that Monaco, aware of the universal value of sport as one of the best tools to establish inter-cultural dialogue, fully supports the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mahe Tupouniua, chairman of the delegation of the Kingdom of Tonga.

Mr. Tupouniua (Tonga): The Tongan delegation joins others in congratulating you, Madam, on your assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly. Let us reassure you of Tonga's full support and its confidence that the sixty-first session of the General Assembly will be productive and successful under your very able leadership. Full recognition is also in order for the excellent work of your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Eliasson, during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly. In the same vein, the Tongan delegation takes this opportunity to commend and extend its gratitude to the outgoing Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his tireless service over the past 10 years in the stewardship of the Organization.

It has been a year since our leaders met at the historic World Summit in an effort to embrace the realities of the world we live in and to duly reflect those challenges in the work of the Organization. We are pleased that there are specific landmarks that attest to the fact that some progress has been made in the implementation of the 2005 Outcome Document (resolution 60/1). They include the inauguration of the Peacebuilding Commission, coupled with the establishment of the Peacebuilding Support Office and the Peacebuilding Fund; the creation of the Human Rights Council; and the establishment of the Central Emergency Response Fund.

Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Tonga also welcomes the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy (resolution 60/288), which forms a basis upon which we can build our consistent and unequivocal condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations — committed by whomever, whenever and for whatever purpose — for terrorism constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security. We look forward to the effective implementation of the Strategy, as well as to the conclusion of a comprehensive convention on international terrorism during the sixty-first session of the General Assembly.

Tonga also remains committed to supporting the work of the Counter-Terrorism Committee. We duly recognize the efforts undertaken to consolidate States' reporting requirements. We also wish to acknowledge the cooperation provided by bilateral, regional and multilateral agencies in helping to fulfil international and regional commitments to combat transnational organized crime and to fight terrorism.

Tonga shares the call for the full restoration of the role of the General Assembly as the main decision-making, representative and policy-making body of the United Nations, in accordance with the provisions of the Charter. That would further enhance the credibility of multilateralism and the important need to address the multifaceted and interconnected challenges and threats confronting the world.

Tonga supports the work pertaining to the remainder of the reform mandates, especially as

regards Secretariat and management reforms, the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council and the strengthening and streamlining of management in the Organization.

The important issue of the reform of the Security Council still remains unresolved, although world leaders acknowledged that it was an essential element of our overall effort. Tonga supports the call by the Secretary-General in his annual report (A/61/1) to find common ground for action on this fundamental piece of overall United Nations reform, as well as his urging that a decision on Council reform be taken sooner rather than later in order to ensure that the United Nations machinery to promote the establishment and maintenance of peace and security will remain relevant and credible to meet today's and tomorrow's challenges. Tonga continues to support Japan's assumption of its proper and permanent place in any enhanced Council.

Tonga commends the contributions of United Nations peacekeepers in fulfilling the Organization/s vital role in helping parties in conflict to end hostilities. To the degree that it is able, Tonga is committed to supporting both international and regional peacekeeping efforts, including the current Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands.

For many island developing countries, including my own, the development agenda remains a top priority. In that regard, the theme of the sixty-first session of the General Assembly, "Implementing a global partnership for development", is not only very pertinent but also very timely. While we reiterate that we take primary responsibility for our own development, we continue to welcome as a necessary step the maintenance and enhancement of support at the regional and international levels to complement our national efforts. That includes the support provided under the Pacific Plan to strengthen regional cooperation and integration, which was endorsed by Pacific leaders in 2005, as well as the implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

Tonga looks forward to progress in the work to enhance mechanisms to promote coherent United Nations support to small island developing States through a strengthened inter-agency consultative process, the finalization of a strategy for resource mobilization and the promotion of partnership initiatives.

In May of this year, His Majesty's Government ratified its Strategic Development Plan 8, entitled "Looking to the future, building on the past", which sets out the Government's road map for the Kingdom's future development path for the period 2006-2007 to 2008-2009. The document was formulated following a lengthy and extensive process of consultation with all of the relevant stakeholders. It provides due recognition to the fact that the success of the implementation of the Development Plan will require the efforts of both State and non-State actors.

The President of the General Assembly has rightly observed that the recent historic High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development revealed the potential and opportunities that globalization presents as a force for improving the lives of millions of people. The meeting provided Tonga, a mature migration-remittance economy, with the opportunity to showcase the important nexus between migration and development.

A study recently produced by the World Bank concluded that, for Tonga, recipient household migration and remittances have positive impacts on migrant-sending countries through improved income distribution and poverty alleviation, induced higher savings and stimulated business activities, resulting in larger investments in education. The study also highlighted that improved and restricted, but organized, labour mobility can significantly contribute to a country's gross domestic product and to overall global income. Labour mobility is therefore a potential vehicle for achieving our commitment to pro-poor strategies such as the Millennium Development Goals and other commitments, and also for achieving national sustainable development strategies.

The suspension of the Doha round of trade talks was disappointing. The failure to conclude the talks will negatively affect global economic prospects and the growth of low-income countries, including Tonga. We join others in urging World Trade Organization member countries to maintain their commitment to the rules-based multilateral trading system, preserve progress that has been achieved and to continue with the negotiations. We also continue to urge the donor community to move forward with the delivery of aid

for trade, independent of the Doha round. Regional cooperation on trade-related projects has the potential to promote the competitiveness of low-income countries, such as the island economies of the Pacific.

In October 2005, Tonga's Legislative Assembly passed a motion to establish a National Committee of the Kingdom of Tonga on Political Reform. With the support of His Majesty's Government, the Committee chaired by His Late Royal Highness Prince Tu'ipelehake has completed public meetings and consultations throughout Tonga as well as in the countries where the majority of Tongans reside, namely, New Zealand, Australia and the United States of America. It is anticipated that the report will be deliberated upon by the Legislative Assembly during its 2006 session and by His Majesty's Government with a view to attaining an appropriate political reform agenda that is not only responsive but also responsible for fulfilling the objectives of building national unity and promoting the social and economic advancement of the people of Tonga.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Léo Mérorès, Chairman of the delegation of Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Mérorès (Haiti) (*spoke in French*): I am honoured to address the Assembly on behalf of the Government and people of Haiti. Allow me, first, to offer my heartfelt congratulations to Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly in its sixty-first session. I am convinced that her wealth of legal training, her profound knowledge of public affairs, her national and international career and her keen negotiating skills mean that this session will be a success. Allow me to reiterate to the President the full support of my country and of the Haitian delegation in discharging her lofty tasks.

I wish also to congratulate Ambassador Jan Eliasson, whose practical spirit, his sense of compromise and great know-how, meant that the sixtieth session was a successful one. I wish him every success in his new job as his country's Minister for Foreign Affairs.

I wish to convey to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, sincere thanks for the skill with which he has conducted the Organization over the past 10 years. I congratulate him also on his continued commitment to my country. The people of Haiti is profoundly grateful to him for his subtlety and determination demonstrated in the quest for viable lasting solutions to the long crisis that has beset my country in recent years. Mr. Annan deserves the full appreciation of the international community for his laudable, indefatigable efforts for peace, justice, human rights, democracy and development.

On 3 July 2006, the Republic of Haiti regained its seat in the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM), thus putting an end to an absence of two long years. We recognize that during this period our brothers and sisters in the Caribbean never lost interest in Haiti's affairs. Quite the contrary: they were strongly committed to finding appropriate solutions, which have allowed my country today to have the honour to participate side by side with them in the great debates concerning the region. On 11 September, Haiti finally rejoined the great family of the Non-Aligned Movement, whose purpose is to strengthen South-South cooperation. This was most welcome. Those two events clearly show that we want to be open to the world.

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome the accession of the Republic of Montenegro to political sovereignty and to the great family of our Organization.

Today, more than ever before, our world is facing manifold threats that imperil its very existence. Despite the Organization's intensive efforts to make the world more human and more liveable, the spectre of major pandemics, poverty, hunger, organized crime, terrorism, armed conflict, civil war and natural disasters continues to haunt us. We therefore need to redouble our efforts to refine our diplomatic approaches and to give priority to dialogue, honest, open negotiations, flexibility and compromise. Those principles lie at the very basis of the creation of the United Nations and reaffirm its strength and its raison d'être. Our Organization remains the ideal forum, the reference point for finding appropriate solutions to the problems that beset our world. Nothing should make us abandon that spirit.

The Republic of Haiti unreservedly supports all of the international community's initiatives to resolve conflicts in Africa, in East Asia and in the Middle East by finding peaceful negotiated solutions respectful of the sovereignty of States.

Terrorism is today assuming apocalyptic proportions. The attacks of 11 September 2001 against targets in the United States and subsequent attacks elsewhere in the world were wake-up calls to us, forcing us to silence our petty interests in order to face this scourge which, unless it is swiftly curbed, will lead to catastrophes with untold consequences. We cannot make mistakes and we cannot hesitate. Recently, we have been impotent, as we witness an infernal cycle of violence, massive destruction of innocent human lives and property. We are seeing attempts to annihilate our institutions and our society. The very future of humanity seems to be taken hostage by unbridled groups that stop at nothing to destroy wherever they can. The Republic of Haiti reaffirms once more its resolve to fight terrorism in all its forms, using the few resources that it has. It supports the preventive measures taken against terrorism, measures taken in a legal context. We encourage States to agree on a global convention on terrorism based on a clear definition acceptable to all.

Haiti welcomes the major steps taken to reform the United Nations at the previous session. We are still far from our goals, but some very significant progress has, nonetheless, been made. We hope that the changes decided on will continue to give our Organization the resources it needs to carry out its global vocation. We must adapt to new requirements, as we reaffirmed at the World Summit of 2005. Accordingly, I applaud the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission. It should play an important part and its purpose is political stability, creating sustainable foundations for socioeconomic development in post-conflict situations, as well as to help strengthen democratic institutions and make them effective in a constitutional framework and under the rule of law.

Similarly, I also welcome General Assembly resolution 60/251, which created the Human Rights Council. I congratulate the 47 members of the Council, who were elected in May in order to put their experience to use in promoting and protecting human rights. I hope that this new body will, in many respects, help to develop our society, to make it more open to dialogue, understanding, mutual respect, social justice and tolerance.

Haiti also welcomes the creation of the Central Emergency Relief Fund. It will provide upfront resources to enable the United Nations to finance humanitarian relief operations, as soon as a catastrophe occurs, in other words, to do more, faster.

My Government agrees with the idea of revitalizing the Economic and Social Council. As one of the main organs of the Organization, it should be more involved in development activities in countries that have been sidelined by history, especially the least developed countries (LDCs). It should provide greater cohesion in adopting the best approach for attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The question of harmonizing strategies and actions among the entities of the United Nations system that work in the area of development is, for us, a crucial one.

Through the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti of the Economic and Social Council, my country enjoys the support of the Council and, recently, at the high-level substantive meeting held in Geneva last July, the Council extended the mandate of that group through July 2007, with the possibility of being renewed once more. I welcome the idea that this extension will enable various sectors involved in the sustained development of Haiti to achieve tangible results for my country.

Since 1945, date of the creation of the United Nations, of which my country was a founding Member, the international landscape has undergone profound change. However, after more than sixty years, the institutional framework of the Security Council has remained the same. Any reform of the Organization would, therefore, be incomplete were it not to include a reorganization of the Security Council. The composition of the Security Council must, therefore, reflect the realities of the twenty-first century and include Member States that are capable of shouldering responsibilities of area of the maintenance of international peace and security. In this new desirable configuration, it is crucial that developing countries from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean enjoy equitable representation.

In February 2006, Haiti held historic, fair and democratic elections. This process will be completed at the end of the year by municipal elections and territorial elections, which will help restore democracy and open the way to political stability. The people of Haiti as a whole decided in favour of change capable of giving it security and improved living conditions. I welcome the activities of the international community for the support and assistance it gave and has continued

to give to Haiti. I salute the Group of Friends of Haiti and all Members of the Organization that have spared no effort or sacrifice to support the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) by providing it with military or police personnel.

I also welcome the adoption of Security Council resolution 1702 (2006) of 15 August 2006, which renewed the mandate of MINUSTAH. I hope that this mission, which is doing a very difficult job — sometimes a dangerous, but noble job — will, together with the national police of Haiti and the Government, manage to control the wanton insecurity that is besetting Haitian society. I therefore call upon the mission to work closely with the Haitian authorities to make the necessary changes depending on the priorities of the moment.

I hope that international assistance will also focus on reforming the judicial system, on the professionalization of the police and on strengthening democratic institutions, such as the parliament, municipal bodies and the territorial collectives.

To the parents, friends and colleagues of peaceworkers who died in Haiti in the line of duty, I would like to reiterate the pain and sorrow of our Government and the Haitian people, who recognize the importance of the United Nations presence in Haiti, the ultimate goal of which is to help the country to recover its stability.

The new team that the head of State of Haiti, Mr. René Garcia Préval, has the privilege of leading since he assumed office in May, has embarked on the long-term task of rebuilding the country. The task is to restore security, to build a modern State, to strengthen democratic institutions and to offer favourable conditions for investment in order to create wealth that benefits everybody. In order to attract investors and create conditions that favour sustainable development, the implementation of basic infrastructure projects is imperative, e.g., the building of roads, ports, airports, providing electricity to the main towns of the country, improving telecommunications networks, all of which requires the support of the international community.

Lack of security is a fertile ground for all kinds of temptation. It favours destabilizing elements that exploit the subhuman conditions under which a large number of our poor live, by arming them to sow death and destruction in the Haitian family, thus imperilling the very future of our Republic. Attacking this lack of security and the climate of violence marked by dramatic kidnappings and deadly clashes between armed gangs and the police is one of the top priorities of my Government. Dialogue, on the one hand, and toughness, on the other hand, are necessary in finding a viable solution to banditry, which in recent times has been spreading in the country, causing a flight of capital as well as a brain drain. Accordingly, the technical and financial support of the international community is therefore essential in the effective implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. We are aware that Haiti is not a classic case, but that does not mean that we should do nothing.

In order to provide speedy relief to the sufferings of the masses and to reduce, even eliminate, the sources of gang recruitment, my Government has launched a social pacification programme. This programme provides for the establishment of a database of more than 300 projects and actions in various sectors of our national life and throughout the territory. It will help create labour-intensive jobs and will enable the State to reduce unemployment, to guarantee some relief and thereby to reduce wrongdoing.

Moreover, in order to create a climate conducive to good governance our head of State initiated an open, honest dialogue with all political sectors upon his election to the presidency. They understood the urgency and responded positively to the invitation by agreeing to participate in the current outward-looking Government, which includes members of various political parties, which are also represented in parliament. The point is to achieve social cohesion and political reconciliation, which are essential for stability, security, economic recovery and the rebuilding of an inclusive society.

The international conference for the economic and social development of Haiti, which was held in Port-au-Prince on 25 July 2006, produced promises of financial commitment by the international community. My Government intends to carry out a long-term development plan. That attests to our strong commitment to take control of the destiny of the country, and that of our international partners to respect the priorities defined by the Government.

In order to facilitate the task of the Government to create the necessary conditions for true economic

and social development, I call upon donors to live up to their promises and to support Haiti in the long term. Financial aid from the international community will facilitate the consolidation of democracy and will help us to establish the basis for sustainable development. In order to attain those results and to strengthen its credibility, the Government is determined to comply with the requirements of good governance, to ease the poverty of the disadvantaged and to continue the ceaseless fight against insecurity and corruption in order to facilitate private national and foreign investment.

In conclusion, I would note that the Government of Haiti is counting on the active cooperation of the international community to assist it in its quest for peace and socio-economic development. Throughout the general debate and listening to the statements made by our many friends from CARICOM, the Americas and all over the world, Haiti has been aware of the keen desire of our partners to work side by side with Haiti in order to meet the challenges faced by our Government. Here, I wish to express the gratitude of the Government of Haiti. Haiti is faced with a daunting challenge, but there is no lack of political will. My country will — with our Organization and with all of us working together — attain our goals.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency, Mr. Jérémie Bonnelame, Chairman of the delegation of the Republic of Seychelles.

Mr. Bonnelame (Seychelles) (*spoke in French*): I wish to begin by extending my congratulations to Ms. Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I also express my country's high regard for her predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, who succeeded in spurring the implementation of United Nations reform.

I also pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his work at the head of our Organization, as reflected in the body of his achievements at the end of his two terms of office. Those achievements include the ongoing reform, the promotion of multilateralism, the prevention of armed conflict, peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance operations, the fight against HIV/AIDS and action on other fronts, in particular in combating poverty and terrorism.

Here I would like to briefly discuss United Nations reform. I echo the sentiments of all who have referred here to the pressing need for the United Nations to adapt to the realities of the world in which we live so that it will be more in tune with current concerns and managed in an effective and transparent manner: an Organization whose Charter recognizes that all States, small and large, possess the right to have their say in the conduct of affairs that are of interest to the international community.

Seychelles thus supported the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council, the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and the resolution on development. We await with great interest the outcome of the ongoing reform of the Economic and Social Council and the Secretariat and its management, and of the revitalization of the General Assembly in keeping with its great authority and enhanced role.

We hope that the General Assembly will take an active part in the appointment of the next Secretary-General, who, we all agree, should be from Asia and with proven qualities and demonstrated leadership. Moreover, the reform of the Security Council is of particular importance in the light of the current challenges to world peace and to the Council's institutional legitimacy.

Now, let me say a few words on the national policy of Seychelles. My country recently held elections in a climate of tranquillity and social harmony. Following the election of President Michel, and on the basis of the new road map that he has drawn for his administration, Seychelles will place even greater emphasis on ensuring sustainable development in all sectors: economic, social, cultural and environmental. The policies seek to guarantee the best possible standard of living for all citizens.

Opening up the economy, respecting human rights and the rule of law and pursuing the objectives of good governance will continue to define the actions of our Government. However, we must note that, as the World Bank and the Commonwealth have highlighted in their joint report, over the past five years small developing States have seen gross national product growth rates decline in comparison to those of large, low-income and middle-income countries. Small States have also experienced an increasingly burdensome foreign debt. Concerning access to foreign capital, there is a trend in private markets to consider small

States to be of high risk, which leads to increased costs that complicate access to those markets.

In recent years, meetings have been held, resolutions have been adopted and statements have been made followed by further meetings, but with little concrete action and without any satisfactory response to our concerns. Seychelles regrets that. The global community is made up of 192 States, and more than 80 of them are small States.

Confronted by these structural development problems in the context of a globalized economy, small States rarely have the means and the capacity to respond appropriately to them. In that connection, the appeal made by the President of the General Assembly for a global development partnership has never been so urgent and critical. The Seychelles hopes that at its sixty-first session the Assembly will take a decisive step forward in bringing about such a partnership.

I should like to conclude my statement by referring to the issues of regional and world peace. Armed conflicts are occurring at a pace that shows that, contrary to our hopes, the world remains unstable and dangerous. Unfortunately, peace and ceasefire agreements do not always lead to a cessation of hostilities. Civilian populations, composed mostly of women and children, continue to be displaced, maltreated and, too often, the victims of crimes and massacres. The situation in Darfur is the most tragic illustration. Those who survive do not always have access to humanitarian aid. Today, according to a United Nations report, even the level of violence facing humanitarian aid teams is unprecedented.

We are all aware of the real causes of wars. Sadly, sometimes the only way to reach a consensus is to say nothing; as the saying goes, diplomacy consists of conversations between friends, and only rarely with the enemy. That is why the Seychelles joins all those in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and everywhere else who hope for a more human, more just and freer world where peace is the rule, not the exception, and not a privilege but a right. That also applies to those countries — such as Palestine and Western Sahara — that hope someday to be able to conduct their affairs as they see fit, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Finally, I should like to reaffirm the support of the Seychelles for the work undertaken by the President of the General Assembly to make the sixty-first session an instrument for peace and development.

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Enele Sosene Sopoaga, chairman of the delegation of Tuvalu.

Mr. Sopoaga (Tuvalu): Everything has been said; everything has been noted. But while it may be true that many boats will rise with the tide, others are bound to sink unless goodwill prevails in this house. Tuvalu wishes to add its voice of solidarity to the work of the United Nations and to what has been a highly enlightening debate.

First, we join wholeheartedly in the high commendations already expressed with regard to the election of Her Excellency Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa as President of the General Assembly and her Bureau, and the sterling efforts of the outgoing President. Ms. Al-Khalifa and her Bureau have our full cooperation. We also wish to join others before us in paying tribute to the work of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. His initiatives on development, security and human rights have taken the United Nations ever closer to all peoples and have made the Organization accessible even to small island States such as Tuvalu. In appreciation, we wish him well and all the best in the future.

For my small island nation, joining the United Nations at the dawn of the new century is an expression of hope. Our hope is that, through the noble ideals and principles of this great body, Tuvalu, despite its physical remoteness and insignificance, will be allowed to paddle its canoe in harmony along with super-tankers and to share the common future of a world of larger freedom: a world in which every State, regardless of its size, is recognized in terms of its sovereignty, its independence and the human rights of its people.

We continue to hold fast to that hope. But, in the present world of interdependence, where great opportunities are accompanied by great challenges, the need for collective action and multilateral cooperation has never been so pressing and urgent. Victory over those challenges can be won not through political fragmentation, finger-pointing and confrontation, but through cooperation.

The showdown of words engaged in by some countries in this Chamber is unfortunate. We must

never forget that along with wealth and power comes responsibility towards others. The risk is high that this House of humanity will fall apart for lack of responsibility and leadership. There is a call for everyone to consistently display the highest degree of morality, solidarity and respect for one other's values and concerns. Otherwise, the ideals of the United Nations cannot be served. As a small, peace-loving nation, Tuvalu strongly believes that engaging in open dialogue and working together in a spirit of mutual understanding within United Nations frameworks is the only way to reach our shared destiny in diversity and with respect for one another.

Tuvalu takes pride in having been part of the United Nations during the negotiations on its reform and development agenda. The adoption and establishment of the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission and of major innovations in the Secretariat show the benefit of working together. Those bodies must be supported to ensure peace and the protection of the human rights of all peoples and communities. But our work will remain unfinished until we make the Security Council and its operational methodologies truly representative of the United Nations membership. To that end, we support the draft resolution of the Group of Four countries on expansion of the Security Council.

The President returned to the Chair.

Development, security and human rights are the cardinal purposes of the United Nations. The fulfilment of those purposes demands that we shoulder our collective responsibility and engage in united action. The successful conclusion of the World Summit last year was a reaffirmation of our resolve to fight poverty and ensure sustainable development through the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

But devising plans without having access to adequate resources is akin to presenting a menu to hungry people: it may be mouth-watering, but without the necessary ingredients, the dishes it describes will remain unattainable. It is essential that we fully implement the Mauritius Strategy by integrating it into the work programmes of the Commission on Sustainable Development, United Nations agencies, conventions — especially the Rio Conventions — and bilateral cooperation partners. Additionally, the strengthening of the coordination capacity of the Department of Social and Economic Affairs with adequate resources in those areas is imperative.

Two weeks ago, in this very Hall, the General Assembly undertook the midterm review of the Brussels Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries. We, as both a least developed country and a small island developing State, are grateful to the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States for his dedicated work, and to the development partners for the support Tuvalu has enjoyed over the years.

It is certainly our view, however, that it is unrealistic and premature to list for graduation Tuvalu and our Pacific least developed country colleagues that are also small island developing States. We feel strongly that, before any graduation can be recommended, thorough consideration should be given to our unique economic vulnerabilities and that this should be done on an in-country basis, not merely through data analysis carried out at a desk halfway around the globe. For these very reasons, and with a view to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, there is a critical need to ensure a United Nations presence in all Pacific small island developing States.

Last month a new Government was elected to power in Tuvalu and has pledged good governance and media freedom as its guiding principles. It has adopted the Tuvalu Sustainable Development Strategy, known as "Te Kakeega II: Vision 2015", as its framework for development partnerships and looks forward to working with the rest of the world in its implementation.

Security challenges continue to create havoc, fear and uncertainty worldwide. Tuvalu strongly deplores terrorism in all its forms and expressions. We in the Pacific are not immune from acts of terrorism. We must therefore collectively continue to make the strongest efforts in our campaign against these forces and be resolute in ensuring effective global anti-terrorism action.

We also encourage the continuing role of the United Nations in working towards a solution to the Palestinian question and in ensuring peace for the

people of Afghanistan, Darfur, Timor-Leste and other regions.

Clearly the United Nations has done well in preventing and resolving deadly conflicts throughout the world. But despite those achievements, the non-representation of Taiwan in the United Nations and its agencies remains an issue of great concern. The threats posed by China's deployment of missiles aimed at Taiwan and the use of force in the Taiwan Strait are real, for the East Asian and Pacific region and for the world as a whole. We urge that immediate peaceful and preventive actions be taken in the Taiwan Strait for the sake of all.

No other challenge to global security is more serious and threatening than the impact of climate change. Climate change is a global problem and can be resolved only through global collective action. Addressing climate change must therefore must be placed at the centre of the work of the United Nations. As is well known, small island developing States like Tuvalu are extremely vulnerable to the impact of climate change and sea-level rise, and already evidence of devastation is prevalent in all regions of the small island developing States. Over the past few years, Tuvalu has witnessed unusual flooding of the main islands with seawater and king tides, as well as severe attacks on fresh water, vegetation, foreshores and coral reefs.

We are frightened and very worried by all these things, which are the result of the actions of others. If nothing is done urgently and we are forced out of our islands, there is no other Tuvalu to which to move. There is still time to act. Once again we appeal to this body for help and for real action.

We strongly believe that we have reached a dangerous level of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere and that urgent action is required to accelerate the necessary responses. The options are available; what is clearly lacking is political will. Unless climate change is addressed, all our efforts for development, security and protection of human rights will be severely undermined.

Clearly it is urgent that the international community take more aggressive action to reduce greenhouse gases. All countries, industrialized and developing, must do their part, with the industrialized countries taking the lead, including through the full implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

To help developing countries contribute in a committed way, we need stronger incentives to promote the development and distribution of renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies. We need a global fund to support such efforts.

It is disappointing to see some large industrialized countries' continued denial and the absence of enough political will on their part to support vulnerable countries such as small island developing States to adapt to the impacts of climate change. We must recognize the "polluter pays" principle and ensure that the countries that are producing the greenhouse gas emissions pay for the damage they are causing to the vulnerable countries.

There is also a need to generate considerably more funds to underwrite the costs of adaptation, including international levies to generate income to boost funding for adaptation and insurance in small island developing States. The mainstreaming of the Mauritius Strategy into the work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, as required under resolution 59/311, is crucial in that regard.

Defining the way forward with respect to future commitments and actions in the area of climate change will require strong political will on the part of all countries. The upcoming twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties to the Climate Change Convention and the second meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, to be held in Nairobi, must come up with clear and practical timetables for accelerated action on mitigation and adaptation. It is imperative also to improve access by small island developing States and least developed countries to Global Environment Facility climate-change resources and convention-related funds. The Nairobi meetings must also decide on governance and management arrangements for the Kyoto Protocol Adaptation Fund to facilitate its early operation.

Finally, we strongly believe that the General Assembly should host, as soon as possible, a summit at the level of heads of Government aimed at bringing forward workable proposals with strong, high-level political endorsement so as to address climate change beyond the year 2012.

Our call for urgent action on climate change is not self-serving. Tuvalu and the small island developing States may be the first to suffer from the

impacts of climate change, but the consequences of not taking real action now will be felt by all around the globe. We all must work together on climate change in a spirit of strong solidarity.

The people of Tuvalu have full confidence in the United Nations and in its ability to ensure the achievement by all peoples of its cardinal purposes of development, security and human rights. It cannot fail the world on climate change; it cannot dash our hopes. Please do not let Tuvalu sink.

God bless the United Nations family. God bless Tuvalu.

The President: I give the floor to Mr. Phesheya Mbongeyi Dlamini, chairman of the delegation of Swaziland.

Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland): It is a great honour and privilege for me to deliver this important statement on behalf of the delegation of the Kingdom of Swaziland. Allow me to convey the warm greetings and best wishes of His Majesty King Mswati III, Her Majesty the Queen Mother, the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland to the whole United Nations family.

The Kingdom of Swaziland warmly congratulates you, Madam, on your historic election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. We are confident that your wide experience and proven legal and diplomatic skills will ensure success in addressing the challenging and daunting issues that face the Assembly at this session. We would also like to commend the excellent work of your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, in particular for his skilful leadership and the great effort he put into directing the General Assembly at its previous session.

The Kingdom of Swaziland would like to pay special tribute to Mr. Kofi Annan for his outstanding work during his tenure as our Secretary-General. Through his untiring and dedicated efforts, he demonstrated the vision and qualities that saw him successfully lead our Organization into the twenty-first century, despite the daunting challenges that the Organization faced. We also commend him for his initiatives in contributing to the economic and social development of the African continent through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The Kingdom of Swaziland is delighted to extend a warm welcome to our Organization's newest Member, the Republic of Montenegro, whose accession is a further confirmation of respect for the principles of universality and representation enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

However, as we welcome our new Member, we remain conscious of the fact that the principle of universality has not been applied to its fullest. I am referring to the exclusion of Taiwan. With the admission of Montenegro, almost all the countries of the world have become Members of this global Organization, all except one — Taiwan. The exclusion of this nation poses a legal and a moral challenge to the international community. The time has come for the United Nations to stop enforcing a policy of exclusion against the 23.6 million people of Taiwan. The Kingdom of Swaziland believes that accepting Taiwan as a member of the United Nations would not only restore the rights of the people of that island but would also contribute to ensuring that peace and stability is maintained in the Taiwan Strait. We believe that every country in that region should be allowed to participate in working towards peace, stability and positive development. We propose, therefore, that General Assembly resolution 2758 (XXVI) of 1971 be reviewed carefully, with a view to restoring the legal and moral rights of the people of Taiwan to be part of the United Nations family.

The Kingdom of Swaziland joins the world in condemning terrorism and threats to international peace and security. We condemn all acts of terrorism that have taken place over the past year and we offer our sympathies and prayers to all those who were affected by such acts, especially the families and friends of those who lost their lives. The world has, in recent times, seen an upsurge of terrorism on an unprecedented level.

We welcome the recent agreement on a counter-terrorism strategy, which demonstrates the commitment of the international community to overcome the scourge of terrorism. It must be borne in mind that all States, large and small, and in every region, are vulnerable and could be affected by terrorism. Therefore, all Member States have to ensure that the strategy is implemented and further updated in order to confront the evolving challenges.

We fully support the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty and call for the elimination of all nuclear weapons by those States that possess them. As part of our commitment to a peaceful world, we support the efforts of the Conference on Disarmament concerning the prohibition of the development and manufacture of new types of weapons of mass destruction. We also continue to be part of the campaign against the trafficking, sale and distribution of small arms and light weapons. Such weapons encourage terrorism on an international as well as on an individual level.

The Kingdom of Swaziland welcomes the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, and we look forward to the realization of the goals envisaged in the formation of that body. We are also proud to congratulate a sister State, the Republic of Angola, on her election to be the first to preside over this important and unique Commission.

The recent tragic events that took place in Lebanon and northern Israel are a cause for great concern and a challenge to the Peacebuilding Commission. The Kingdom of Swaziland stands firmly behind the collective effort of the international community to ensure the implementation of the Security Council resolution that ended the conflict between Israel and Hizbollah. We are of the view that a comprehensive peace process must be revived as a matter of urgency.

While we are especially encouraged by the developments towards peace on the African continent, we remain concerned about the worsening security situation in Darfur in western Sudan, where thousands of people have been killed and more than 2 million displaced since the conflict erupted in 2003. We urge the parties concerned to demonstrate a spirit of necessary compromise and to cooperate with efforts made to facilitate the search for peaceful and lasting solutions. The Kingdom of Swaziland supports unequivocally every effort that is being made to sustain peace in this area. We join our fellow Member States in calling for support from the United Nations. We fully hope and expect that commitments in words will be followed up by deeds.

We welcome the results of the historic first-round elections that took place in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the first of its kind in 40 years. These elections were the first crucial step towards the recovery of that country, and we support every effort by the United Nations and the international community to consolidate this achievement, bearing in mind that it will make a difference not only to the Democratic Republic of Congo but to the African continent as a whole.

The recently established Human Rights Council has just concluded a successful inaugural session. The Kingdom of Swaziland welcomes the creation of this historic new body. The creation of the Council was indeed a step in the right direction towards strengthening our Organization's human rights tools. We believe that the work of the Council will be guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity, international dialogue and cooperation. In this regard, we align ourselves with the rest of Africa in supporting a less-politicized body that will respond promptly to cases of human rights abuses in any part of the world.

The Kingdom of Swaziland believes that the ongoing reforms of the United Nations are essential, especially if the Organization is to retain its global credibility. It is therefore our hope that the many key reform proposals that were deferred to this session will be dealt with satisfactorily. Meanwhile, we welcome the progress that has been made so far, including the establishment of a United Nations Ethics Office, the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights Council.

Neither renewal nor reform would be complete without the reform of the Security Council. In the quest for an overall agreement on this issue, the Kingdom of Swaziland supports the position of the Non-Aligned Movement and the African Group concerning the composition and working methods of the Security Council. We hope and expect that positive results will flow from the conclusion of this matter.

As a Member State of this body, we recognize the vital role that the major United Nations conferences and summits have played in identifying commonly agreed objectives which should lead to the successful implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, we do realize that nothing can be achieved without adequate funding, especially for developing nations. Even though promises have been made, the time has come for them to be translated into actions.

The breakdown and suspension of negotiations of the World Trade Organization's Doha Round is

lamentable. However, insofar as the outcome is concerned, the Kingdom of Swaziland believes that the needs of developing nations must be fully taken into consideration. Failure to do so will undermine the already limited trade opportunities of these nations and detract from the pursuit of policies in key areas, such as employment, industrialization, food security, rural development and sustained economic growth.

While we welcome the relevant ideas and general principles for designing microeconomic, sectoral and trade policies contained in the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's Trade Development Report of 2006, we still believe that the specific needs of developing nations have to be addressed.

On a more domestic note, let me report that the HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to be one of the biggest challenges faced by the Kingdom of Swaziland. As we begin to realize the benefits of a full-scale national roll-out of antiretroviral drugs, a critical area of concern is the care needed by the estimated 63,000 children who have been orphaned by the pandemic.

That is why, among many other structures we have put in place to curb this scourge, we have revived the concept of the "KaGogo", which means, literally, "grandmother's house". These KaGogo centres are being constructed across the country and are a new initiative based on traditional ways that empower local communities to look after their orphans within traditional structures. During the High-level Conference on HIV/AIDS held in June 2006, His Majesty King Mswati III clearly spelled out the scale of the pandemic and how it is taking its toll on our nation. It is indeed our greatest challenge.

The Kingdom of Swaziland fully supports the Political Declaration that was adopted at the High-level Conference, and we are confident that this renewed commitment will strengthen the global response to the pandemic. Thus, we realize the urgency of combining our efforts to ensure that the rate of infection decreases and that greater access to treatment and care for those who are already living with the virus is achieved. We fully support the efforts of such organizations as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), especially in terms of minimizing the threat of HIV to young people. We believe that that is a moral obligation and is essential for halting the escalation of the infection rate. In this regard, we look forward to working closely with United Nations agencies in order to alleviate the situation.

On a more positive note, the Kingdom of Swaziland is now implementing the recommendations of our job creation summit, which took place last year. His Majesty King Mswati III always stands behind his people and fully supports the idea of the participation of the people in building the economy. For instance, he encourages them to start their own businesses as a means of reducing the unemployment level. However, we still face significant challenges, e.g., market fluctuations in certain products such as sugar and textiles. We also encourage our people to enter into partnerships and join ventures with foreign direct investors in order to develop our nation.

In conclusion, allow me to allude to the fact that there is indeed much vital work to be completed during this sixty-first session of the General Assembly. The Kingdom of Swaziland is confident that the initiatives already taken will lead to the renewal of our Organization, and we look forward to a new dynamic and vibrant working period. We are indebted to the United Nations for all we have received and achieved over the years towards the development of our nation.

I am, therefore, charged by His Majesty The King, Her Majesty The Queen Mother, the Government and the people of the Kingdom of Swaziland with proclaiming the renewal of our commitment to the Charter of the United Nations. We ask for God's blessings upon those charged with leading the Organization to give them the wisdom and direction they require to carry out these tasks on behalf of all the peoples of the world.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Negash Kebret Botora, chairman of the delegation of Ethiopia.

Mr. Kebret Botora (Ethiopia): Allow me to extend to you, Madam President, our sincere congratulations on your assumption of the Presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session and to express our full confidence in your ability to guide the session successfully.

Let me also express our appreciation to your predecessor, Mr. Jan Eliasson, for his leadership during the sixtieth session.

My delegation's appreciation also goes to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his selfless

commitment and devotion to the objectives of the United Nations, in general, and for his contributions, through various initiatives, to the efforts of reforming our Organization and for his dedication to their practical implementation, in particular.

In our view, one of the key accomplishments of the international community in recent years is the agreement on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is imperative that we all commit to building stronger partnerships to achieve these noble goals and targets. In this regard, we are cognizant of the fact that each country is responsible for its development. It should also be equally recognized that, for those countries at the early stage of economic development, there is a need for stronger support from the international community if they are to meet the MDGs.

For low-income countries, there is nothing more important than a partnership that is predictable, consistent and based on mutual obligations defined in advance. The long-awaited opening up of international trade, especially through the elimination of agricultural subsidies, should also be expedited.

On our part, we have intensified our efforts to improve the socio-economic conditions of Ethiopia. Today, in the decade and a half since the dictatorship was swept out of our country, our socio-economic progress has been substantial. We have succeeded in channelling our limited resources into capacity-building and infrastructure programmes serving the entire country. We have opened up new universities and technical institutions of higher learning, expanded primary health-care services and built roads, airports, power plants, transmission and telecommunication facilities and services, among others. As attractive opportunities have become more apparent, domestic and foreign investment has grown.

In this regard, I would like to highlight some of the achievements recorded so far. In the past three fiscal years, the Ethiopian economy has grown by an average of 9.5 per cent annually. Over the same period, our export trade has grown by 28.5 per cent per annum. Our primary school enrolment ratio has increased to 89 per cent from a mere 30 per cent in the early 1990s. In order to strengthen our capacity for development, we are building 13 public universities. In two to three years, when these universities are fully operational, the total annual intake of public universities would increase from the current 30,000 to 150,000 students. Similar results have also been achieved in the health sector, where the Government is equally determined to enable rural people in Ethiopia to have adequate access to basic health care by 2010.

Benefiting from the encouraging results of the first five year plan and the experience gained in its implementation, the second five year plan, namely, the Programme for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty, was drawn up on a much wider and enhanced scale. The main objective of this latest plan is to alleviate poverty by ensuring food security and meeting the MDGs.

As it carries out its development agenda, Ethiopia strongly believes that the prevalence of peace and security in the country and its region is an absolute necessity. For this reason, Ethiopia will not allow its dispute with Eritrea to distract it from its focus on development, although that has been the main objective of Eritrea since the conflict began eight years ago. For the last four years, Eritrea has been blaming Ethiopia for its own aggression against us and for the current stalemate in the peace and demarcation process. In fact, now, the whole world is being blamed for Eritrea's own failure and for its inability to behave like a normal State.

For the benefit of this Assembly, it would be fitting to place the conflict in the proper context and perspective for a better appreciation of the current impasse in the peace process. It should be recalled that Eritrea launched an unprovoked attack against Ethiopia in May 1998 in blatant disregard of international law, thereby igniting the war and leading to the present crisis. In this respect, I wish to draw the Assembly's attention to the decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Claims Commission regarding issues of liability in the war between the two countries.

In its decision, the Commission set forth, inter alia, the following conclusions. First, Eritrea is liable for committing unprovoked aggression against Ethiopia. The Commission stated that Eritrea violated Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter of the United Nations on 12 May 1998 and the days immediately following when it resorted to armed force in attacking and occupying areas peacefully administered by Ethiopia. Secondly, Eritrea is liable to compensate Ethiopia for the damages caused by that violation of international law. Thirdly, the Commission rejected

Eritrea's argument that its recourse to force was justified, because some of the territory question was territory to which Eritrea had a claim.

The Commission's decision shows not only Eritrea's warped understanding of international law but unambiguously confirms that Eritrea's illegal act constituted aggression.

Before Eritrea launched its aggression and during the war and after, Ethiopia has shown its strong desire and willingness to resolve the conflict with Eritrea by peaceful means. It should be recalled that, in order to create conditions for a sustainable peace and in order to re-establish all-around cooperation between the two countries, Ethiopia presented a five-point peace plan, which the international community, including the Security Council, had welcomed. However, the proposal was flatly rejected by Eritrea.

We have also cooperated fully with the Secretary-General's Special Envoy. Furthermore, Ethiopia has welcomed the peace initiative presented by the Witnesses to the Algiers Agreement, which is supported by the Security Council and made the following proposals. The current impasse should be resolved with the assistance of a neutral facilitator in the demarcation process. Freedom of operations by the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) should be restored, together with the sanctity of the Temporary Security Zone. The threat or use of force should be eliminated. There should be normalization of relations between the two countries. In this connection, I would like to assure the international community that we shall continue to persevere in our search for a lasting peace.

Ethiopia has on various occasions expressed its readiness to demarcate the boundary, through dialogue, in accordance with the decision of the Boundary Commission, and has attended in good faith the meetings convened by the Commission. It has also reaffirmed its readiness to normalize its relations with Eritrea. Ethiopia has done so not because it is desperate for closer relations with Eritrea, but rather because normalization is critical for durable peace. But Eritrea will have none of this. Why? Because Eritrea's strategic goal is neither peace nor a peaceful common boundary. What it wants is interminable boundary problems with Ethiopia.

The latest report of the Secretary-General on Ethiopia and Eritrea, of 19 September (S/2006/749), and the report of the Boundary Commission annexed to it clearly indicate that the Commission's June and August meetings were cancelled because Eritrea refused to attend. Eritrea has also issued ultimatums as a condition for its cooperation with the Boundary Commission. I wish to underline here that Eritrea has no reason to be frustrated by the lack of the speedy implementation of demarcation. Eritrea is the reason why the boundary between the two countries has still not been demarcated.

Eritrea's illegal and anti-peace stance is not limited to issuing ultimatums. It has blatantly violated the Algiers Agreement by threatening the use of force and has violated the integrity of the Temporary Security Zone by deploying its armed forces there. It has tightened its blatant restrictions on the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE) and its personnel. The Secretary-General has reported time and again that Eritrea has not only prohibited the Mission from carrying out its mandated tasks, but also engaged in a series of arrests and detentions of its personnel. Those are naked violations of the Algiers Agreement, Security Council resolutions and the Charter.

The way forward to break the current impasse in the peace process is very clear. Eritrea needs to abide by the relevant Security Council resolutions and the Algiers Agreement, withdraw its armed forces from the Temporary Security Zone and restore the Zone's integrity and UNMEE's freedom of operation. It must demonstrate its compliance with article 1 of the December 2000 Agreement by renouncing the use of force to resolve the dispute between the two countries. It should cooperate with the international community in its efforts aimed at resolving the dispute peacefully and through dialogue. Only when Eritrea decides to cooperate with those legal measures will we be able to begin to resolve the dispute in accordance with international law.

Eritrea should behave as a responsible State and resolve any dispute through diplomatic means. Eritrea must understand that that is its only option. Its continued, dangerous tactic of using brinkmanship against many actors in the international community is not acceptable.

Ethiopia shares a border of more than 2,000 kilometres with neighbouring Somalia and is home to about 3.5 million Ethiopian Somalis. It is in the

interests of Ethiopia that peace, stability and national harmony prevail in that country. It is precisely for that reason that we have spared no effort over the past 15 years — working together with partners in the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU) — to help the Somalis to achieve peace and national reconciliation.

The Transitional Federal Government of Somalia is the product of the efforts made by Somalis themselves, with the support of IGAD countries, the AU and the international community in general. That Government is now facing a major challenge from those who have ambitions that have nothing to do with Somalia but everything to do with chaos, instability and terror. The international community would do itself a great disservice if it failed to appreciate the implications of what is currently happening in Somalia and did not respond in an appropriate manner.

Somalia is being dragged into the abyss by those who are using religion as a cover to deny the people of Somalia peace and the opportunity to revive a nation that has been in a state of collapse for 15 years now, making it possible for those who have no interest in peace and stability to thrive. The latest opportunistic move in this regard was made by Eritrea, but it is bound to fail. IGAD and the AU are asking for political and diplomatic support so that the Transitional Federal Government can be in a position to contain those who are the agents not of love, but of disharmony — not of peace, but of war. That is not too much to ask of the international community.

Only when the Transitional Federal Government is in a position to protect itself from the internal and external enemies of peace will dialogue provide a solution to the crisis in Somalia — a crisis that the extremists within the Islamic Courts Union hope will engulf the whole region. It is precisely for that reason that the partial lifting of the arms embargo is so critical. There are those who want to wish away the danger in Somalia. There are, on the other hand, those who want to benefit from the danger. It is obvious that the latter group, to which Eritrea belongs, is taking advantage of the naivety of the former.

There should be no doubt that Ethiopia will continue to be a pillar of peace and stability in the Horn of Africa. That is Ethiopia's vocation, whether with respect to the problem in Somalia or in connection with the difficulty we have in ensuring that Eritrea chooses the peaceful path. Resort to force is never a basis for sustainable peace. That is the philosophy that underpins our policy towards Eritrea and towards the crisis in Somalia. There is no better guarantee for peace and stability than the nurturing of mutual confidence and trust, regardless of differences in outlook or in political or other values. This also explains Ethiopia's legendary commitment to the United Nations and to its principles and purposes. As I conclude, therefore, I would like to reaffirm Ethiopia's devotion to the United Nations and to the values of interdependence, which the Organization embodies.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Martin Belinga-Eboutou, chairman of the delegation of Cameroon.

Mr. Belinga-Eboutou (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): I should like, on behalf of my delegation, to say how delighted we are to see you, Madam, the representative of the Kingdom of Bahrain, a friendly country, presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. I would like to assure you of our sincere wishes for your success. You can rest assured that my delegation will fully cooperate with you.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Kingdom of Sweden, a friendly country whose Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jan Eliasson, presided over the General Assembly at its sixtieth session in such an outstanding manner. Major progress was made during that session.

Finally, I should like to extend to Montenegro a warm welcome to the family of the peoples of the United Nations.

This session of the General Assembly is taking place at a time when the world is once again facing major challenges. I am thinking in particular of the upsurge of terrorism, which threatens the security of States and our collective security. I am also thinking of the persistence of underdevelopment and the almost endemic poverty in the countries of the South. I am thinking, too, of pandemics of all kinds, including HIV/AIDS. Finally, I am thinking of cross-border organized crime.

Our world and our Organization need more generosity, more solidarity, more ethical behaviour and more tolerance, but also more courage and more imagination to tackle these challenges, which require a global approach in the multilateral context in which the United Nations is the forum par excellence.

Opinions are being expressed in various quarters deploring the inability of the Organization to respond adequately to the fundamental aspirations of the world's people, while some also believe that the Organization has become obsolete. Cameroon would like to reaffirm that it believes that, despite the inevitable shortcomings inherent in an organization of such size, the United Nations is today, more than ever before, the only institution that can bring about consensus in an effort to ease tension and find solutions. Very simply put, there is no substitute for the United Nations in managing in a coherent manner the problems to which I have referred.

In that regard, I would like to pay special tribute to the work of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. I also wish to convey to him the gratitude of my country and my personal regard and appreciation for his efforts. Following in the footsteps of his predecessors, he has reinvigorated multilateralism in an especially difficult international environment. Cameroon is proud to have contributed to the election of this noble son of Africa following its assumption of the chairmanship of the Organization of Africa Unity. Today, while peace to many seems to be but a myth, Africa is truly honoured that Mr. Kofi Annan has taken his place among the world's great peacemakers. In that regard, the Noble Peace Prize awarded to him was richly deserved.

In an international environment characterized by difficulties in ensuring that the rule of law prevails over the use of force, the Secretary-General was courageously able to promote the voice of reason. In an environment of heated passions, he succeeded in delivering a message of peace and brotherhood. Allow me, by way example in that regard, to refer to his unequivocal commitment to Cameroon and Nigeria — two brotherly countries linked by history and geography — in the peaceful and consensual implementation of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling of 10 October 2002 finally resolving the border dispute between our two countries.

The Greentree Agreement of 12 June 2006, implemented following the withdrawal of all Nigerian troops on 14 August 2006, is a credit both to the United Nations and the personal commitment of the Secretary-General. I would like to take this opportunity to thank friendly countries, including the Federal Republic of Germany, the United States of America, France and the United Kingdom. Along with the United Nations, those countries agreed to provide their moral and political support to the Greentree Agreement, which defined the modalities for the implementation of the ICJ ruling of 10 October 2002 on the Bakassi Peninsula. More importantly, they agreed to help us to implement it.

I would also like to reaffirm here and now Cameroon's solemn commitment to continue to fulfil in good faith all its obligations emanating from the International Court of Justice decision and the Greentree Agreement. In particular, I would like to affirm that Nigerian nationals living in Bakassi desiring to remain there will be treated in the same way as the 4.5 million Nigerians living in Cameroon, who are able to live their lives in peace and harmony with Cameroonians.

That process has taught us that true lasting peace can never be imposed; it can only be established through patience and a spirit of compromise. In short, real lasting peace can only come from genuine joint political will.

Allow me to highlight some of the many initiatives undertaken by the United Nations that reflect the geopolitical developments under way and the aspirations of people around the world. In that regard, I would specifically like to refer to the Millennium Declaration, which is a genuine charter of international solidarity binding on all of us as an urgent obligation. In addition, the Organization's ongoing attention to Africa is prominently reflected in the Secretary-General's report on sustainable development and the causes of conflict in Africa, a document that will be an ongoing source of encouragement to our countries.

I also wish to recall that the Secretary-General laid the foundations for the reform of the Organization, which was made necessary in the light of the changes that have taken place in the world's balance of power since the founding of United Nations. I should therefore now like to say a few words about what has come to be known as United Nations reform.

The Organization stands no chance of maintaining its place in world affairs unless it safeguards its legitimacy. In other words, it must ensure that its representative character is beyond reproach. The reform we seek should therefore take into account the development of the international system in the course of recent decades. Likewise, it will no doubt be necessary to modify the role played by some organs of the United Nations system. In that

connection, I am thinking in particular of the role of the International Court of Justice. It is in everyone's interest that the reform be properly carried out while taking into account today's realities. But however reform is carried out, I believe that Africa should have permanent representation in the Security Council. That is not just a matter of justice, but also one of common sense.

In order to retain its credibility, the Organization should resolutely continue to pursue its efforts with regard to major issues related to peace and development in the developing world. On the political level, special attention should be paid to the Middle East, Darfur and the issue of nuclear proliferation. With regard to development, the Millennium Development Goals should be attained within a reasonable time frame.

In order to avert doubts as to the positive aspects of trade globalization, the United Nations likewise has a responsibility to maintain a balance between the countries of the North and the South in such major trade negotiations as the now-suspended Doha Round. Failure in that regard would have disastrous consequences for Africa.

Finally, our Organization must continue to safeguard the cultural identity of the various peoples of the world and to promote a dialogue among cultures and religions. The sharing of experiences and the knowledge gained through such an honest and respectful dialogue will be the best antidote to the clash of civilizations that some predict as well as a sure alternative to terrorism and violence.

Over the years, the United Nations has become a crucial stakeholder in the international arena. I believe we should all welcome that development because, first of all, this parliament of nations is the only forum in which virtually all peoples are represented and where a blueprint for international democracy is gradually being drafted. We should welcome it also because — and this is an important point — the systematic consideration by our Organization of crises or tensions gives negotiation a chance and makes the use of force less likely. True, it has not just been success stories, but I think that, broadly speaking, the balance sheet is quite positive. This should prompt us not to begrudge the United Nations our trust and to give it means commensurate with its ambitions, its responsibilities and the expectations we have of it.

For its part, Cameroon will continue to support all the initiatives of our Organization aimed at maintaining peace and solidarity among peoples. I need hardly say that the human person must remain paramount among our concerns. This, inter alia, will be the task facing the new Human Rights Council, of which my country is honoured to be a member.

Our Organization cannot remain indifferent to the tragedy of the massive migration flows that we have been witnessing for some time. Clearly this situation poses a challenge not only to our States but also to the entire international community, and we must all work together to strengthen cooperation in this area between the countries of the North and the countries of the South.

I believe that, appearances to the contrary — and although many hotbeds of tension and threat still remain — the international community seems to be moving towards greater stability. Credit, to a large extent, goes to the work done by the United Nations, its various organs and its staff, who are carrying out their responsibilities in conditions that are often difficult, even dangerous.

That is the substance of the message of Mr. Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate.

(*spoke in Arabic*)

The general debate of the General Assembly at its sixty-first session has now concluded. I thank all speakers for their valuable contributions.

The annual general debate provides a unique opportunity for world leaders to meet and exchange views on the most pressing global issues and challenges. While there may not be agreement on all matters on our agenda, we share a common belief in the merit of dialogue and international cooperation. For such a dialogue to be fruitful, we all agree that values such as mutual respect, tolerance and understanding should guide our work and deliberations.

Over the past two weeks, we have had a rich and substantive debate. It will not be possible for me to summarize all the points made, but let me mention a few issues addressed by representatives.

The General Assembly is the main body and plays a key role in deliberating and making policies. It represents all States Members of the United Nations. The theme of this year's general debate was "Implementing a global partnership for development", and I am pleased that so many heads of State and Government highlighted that issue in their statements.

This year there was a clear message that we need to redouble our efforts to make progress towards achieving internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and address the deadlock in the international trade negotiations. Many representatives stressed the need to move ahead to eradicate extreme poverty, particularly in the light of the trend reversals we are witnessing in Africa. Some also underlined the need to explore creative methods of funding the development programmes, including contributions from the private sector.

Representatives also expressed a strong commitment to continue the follow-up and implementation of the reform agenda adopted at the World Summit last September. They commended the achievements made at the sixtieth session, including the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council and the Central Emergency Response Fund, and they expressed their will to enable these new organs and institutions to work effectively and live up to their potential.

They reaffirmed the role of the United Nations in fighting the scourge of terrorism and welcomed the adoption of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. They emphasized the need to take this work forward, both by implementing the Strategy and by concluding negotiations on a comprehensive convention on international terrorism.

On institutional reforms, representatives made it clear that they would like to see further progress on Secretariat and management reform, including mandate review; Security Council reform; strengthening of the Economic and Social Council; and General Assembly revitalization.

In addition, they expressed the wish that the United Nations assume a more proactive role in both the prevention and resolution of armed conflicts. They underlined in particular the importance of reaching a just and lasting solution to the Middle East crisis, and expressed the absolute need to resolve the situation in Darfur.

They called on the United Nations to take the lead in the prevention of ethnic cleansing, mass killings and genocide. Furthermore, many representatives stressed the need to regain momentum in our work in the areas of disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation.

Other fundamental global challenges that were raised include environmental degradation and climate change, HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, gender equality and education for all. Representatives also underlined the need to promote dialogue among civilizations in order to enhance our mutual understanding of each other's cultures.

Ladies and gentlemen, you have provided useful input and guidance for our work ahead. Over the coming days, I will carefully review the points made during the general debate. I will continue listening to any further ideas that you may have for our programme of work.

We must work together in a transparent, efficient and coherent manner in order to make the best use of our time and resources. We have to enhance trust and confidence among ourselves with the aim of serving our common interests and achieving tangible results that will make a difference to the lives of millions of people around the world.

Next week I will communicate my proposal on the agenda. I look forward to constant communication and close and constructive cooperation with all of you in the year ahead.

(*spoke in English*)

We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

A number of delegations have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention, and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Amorós Núñez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard a speaker making accusations against Cuba, not because of any real concern for human rights, but because of his calling as a straw man, lackey and wretch. Everyone knows that all he wants to do is

to offer service to the powerful nation that seeks a pretext to justify its illegal and cowardly interventionist policy of aggression and blockade against Cuba.

The Czech Republic again shows unparalleled submission in adopting the priorities of its master. It demonstrates how it is currently a global satellite, having not only gradually assumed its role as total accomplice to its master's abuses of power — committed before the very eyes of the world under the pretext of a war against terrorism — but also supporting the aggressive policy towards our small country.

With this attempt to stigmatize Cuba, the Czech Republic seeks in vain to overshadow Cuba's uncompromising rebellion against the unfair imperialist world order, our unyielding defence of our independence and sovereignty and our determination to follow our own path, without accepting any outside interference. It seeks to distort the deeply rooted revolutionary process that has allowed the Cuban people to become a stakeholder and the real master of its fate, ensuring the fullest enjoyment of all human rights by Cuban men and women, without discrimination of any type based on gender, colour or social class.

The Czech Republic wants the world to forget how Cuba was able to do away with corruption, fraud, theft of the nation's heritage and neglect of the hardships of the great majority suffering from hunger, illiteracy and poverty, and how it eliminated the imposition of brutal dictatorships that sought bloodily to silence our people's just demands during most of the almost six decades of neo-colonial government controlled from Washington.

The Czech Government seeks to challenge the fact that no one has been able to prove that there has been a single extrajudicial execution or disappeared person in Cuba since 1959, that a single Cuban mother has been searching for the remains of her disappeared children, or that a single grandmother has been unable to find her grandchild who had been given to another family following the murder of his parents. Never in a Cuban jail has a single prisoner been mistreated; nor have they had to go down on their knees, terrified, before a dog trained to kill. And why does the Government which levels these accusations remain silent and complicit in the torture and outrages of another country?

The Czech Government allies itself with the policy of aggression against Cuba, thus hiding the real essence of that policy. The imperialists and their Czech lackeys see danger in the spread of the notion that it is possible to build a just society of solidarity where all can enjoy their human rights and where there are no shady deals and massive profits for big capital at the cost of the impoverishment of the people. Everybody knows how much discrimination and exclusion exist in the Czech society. But we are not going to dwell on that here. Let their leaders feel the shame of not being able to do what a small country suffering under a blockade, like Cuba, has been able to do.

Lastly, we want to make something clear to that Government, which has no right to exercise sovereignty over the Cubans: those it describes as the peaceful opposition are really mercenaries who receive millions of dollars and guidance from the United States Government and do not defend or represent their people. These mercenaries, who work in the service of a foreign Power, supporting aggressive policies against their own people — policies that the world rejects — want to turn their homeland into a United States protectorate.

It is we, the people and the Government of Cuba who are the dissenters and the opposition who have defied the pressures that others seek to impose upon us, and whom the Czech Republic will never have the capability or the sense of honour to confront.

Mr. Mohamad (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): We have asked to speak in exercise of the right of reply because it is our duty to correct false information circulated by some parties hostile to the Sudan. When speaking on the subject of Darfur, one must not be deceptive or distort facts to serve foreign interests that are alien to the peace and security of Darfur.

From this very rostrum only a few days ago (see A/61/PV.11) the President of the Republic of Sudan explained the various dimensions of the conflict in Darfur. As in other conflicts taking place in the world today, there are economic and development dimensions in the Darfur region, which has been ravaged by drought and desertification. The people of Darfur, like other peoples in the region, coexist with nomadic Bedouins and sedentary farmers. All of them have been

the victims of conflict over food, pasture and water resources.

The conflict reached its height in 2003 and 2004, then the situation improved, thanks to the Government's strategy of opting for a negotiated political solution as the only way out of the crisis. And, thanks to a purely African effort, we achieved the Darfur Peace Agreement, which was signed on 5 May 2006 in Abuja, Nigeria. Peace has now been restored there, and there have been improvements on every front, particularly on the humanitarian front.

Contradicting information circulated by certain parties that are pleased by crisis and disaster, the head of the main rebel faction is a Vice-President of the Republic. There has been progress on the implementation of this Agreement, progress that undermines the attempts of some to compromise the Agreement.

The situation on the ground is improving daily, especially in the security and humanitarian areas. However, some parties, hostile to the Sudan, keep trying to paint a tragic picture, distorting all the facts. Those same parties had already described events in the Sudan as genocide. They have taken advantage of certain international entities, such as the Security Council with its notorious resolution 1706 (2006), not to achieve peace and stability in Darfur but to serve their domestic political interests.

That shameful resolution seeks to punish my country, which has an independent political position and which plays an active role, because those parties are after Sudan's wealth. It is also contrary to the Abuja Agreement, which stresses the role of the African Union in its implementation. The Agreement did not in any way indicate any role for the United Nations. The Council's resolution circumvents the Agreement by trying to form parallel entities.

The Government of the Sudan has no problem in dealing with the United Nations, of which it has been an effective Member. Witness the presence of one of the largest United Nations missions in the Sudan, where it tries to reinforce implementation of the peace agreement in the south. The recent position of the Government of the Sudan with regard to deployment of international forces in Darfur is a natural position adopted by an independent national Government with total sovereignty.

Flagrant violations and victimization are being exercised by some States, which are trying to use the Security Council to serve their own agendas and interests. Those States are interfering in the internal affairs of my country. The Secretary of State of the United States of America said in Washington that the problem is not the humanitarian situation in Darfur, but rather the restructuring of the Sudan and how it should be governed. We say to the American Secretary of State that the people of the Sudan are the ones who decide how to manage their own affairs.

There have been several resolutions calling for the imposition of sanctions on parties that did not sign the Agreement or that were working to hamper it. Although the Security Council adopted a resolution calling for sanctions against them, the Council has remained powerless because several of the major Powers in the Council are on the side of those hampering peace and are hostile to the Government, which seeks to implement that Agreement. Those same people shed crocodile tears from this very rostrum about the Agreement and the people of Darfur.

Finally, we would like to recall the following. Our conviction has never been as strong as it is now. The deployment of an international force in Darfur has become an end in itself. It is a way to settle political accounts. That has prompted the people of the Sudan to oppose such a colonialist approach, which defies the principles of law and the values, norms and rights enshrined in the Charter, which any Member State has.

From this rostrum we call upon peaceful States to support efforts that encourage parties that have not signed the Agreement to do so. We also urge them to reaffirm the role of the African Union and to offer logistical, technical and financial support to the African Union forces so that they can carry out their political, security and military role in accordance with the Abuja Agreement.

We must respect the principles of the Charter, act wisely and respect the role and contributions of the Government of the Sudan, which has put an end to one of the longest-standing crises in Africa. I refer to the war in the south. We are trying to implement the Darfur Peace Agreement, which was drafted after much patience and perseverance. The language of threats and sabre-rattling and the dramatic exploitation of the situation in Darfur will not prevent our Government and people from making every effort to find a solution

to the problem of Darfur by implementation of the Abuja Agreement, in letter and spirit, and in the interests of our country and of Africa.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Mammadov (Azerbaijan): I would like to exercise the right of reply in response to the statement made by the Foreign Minister of Armenia, delivered to the General Assembly on 25 September.

Azerbaijan reiterates that this rostrum has again been abused by Armenia in a manner that is aggressive and harmful to the settlement process of the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict. The Minister's statement is a tragic illustration of the attitude of the current position of Armenia towards its immediate neighbours, a reality that we face both in our daily life in the region and in the negotiation process.

There is a strong temptation to refrain from lowering ourselves to the level of this rhetoric, which is full of accusations with regard to Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, we have to reiterate to the Armenian side that its extremely aggressive statements run counter to the position of the international community as expressed in the relevant resolutions and decisions of the Security Council, the Council of Europe, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and other international organizations.

With reference to the allegation by the Armenian Minister concerning the destruction of Armenian monuments on the territory of Azerbaijan, let me point out that Azerbaijan has initiated and consented immediately to receive a Council of Europe fact-finding mission to both Armenia and Azerbaijan, including the occupied territories. The mission's task would be to verify the situation with respect to the cultural, historic, religious and architectural monuments and cemeteries in both countries. We are still awaiting the official response of the Government of Armenia to this initiative.

Another notorious allegation to the effect that the Armenian community of the Nagorny-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan exercised its right to self-determination is nothing more than Armenia's attempt to use this high principle of international law as a cover for the ethnic cleansing carried out in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan and the continued occupation of those territories.

General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), adopted in 1960 and entitled "Declaration on the granting of independence to colonial countries and peoples", foreseeing attempts to erroneously interpret the right of self-determination, clearly determined in its operative paragraph 6 that

> "Any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country is incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations."

Both the 1970 Declaration on Principles of International Law concerning Friendly Relations and Cooperation among States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (resolution 2625 (XXV), annex) and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights have unequivocally declared that recognition of the right of self-determination should not be construed as authorizing or encouraging any action that would dismember or impair totally or in part the territorial integrity or political unity of sovereign and independent States.

These three landmark documents developed clear guidelines for the universal application of the principles embodied in the Charter. It is important to emphasize that the right of people to self-determination is a collective right of an entire population inhabiting a certain territory, and that that right should be exercised peacefully and in a manner that is compatible with the Charter, thereby contributing to the strengthening of the political unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. These are the rules governing inter-State relations in this house, and Armenia, as a Member State, has the responsibility to abide by them.

It is disingenuous and unrealistic to claim that the Armenian population of the Nagorny-Karabakh region of the Republic of Azerbaijan exercised its right to self-determination on the territory that was ethnically cleansed of the indigenous Azerbaijani population. Such irresponsible assertions by the Minister of Armenia reflect the degree of morality of the current Armenian leadership, which is attempting to consolidate and legitimize the results of the ethnic cleansing and occupation of the territories of Azerbaijan. The Armenian Minster infringes on the

rights of the indigenous Azerbaijani population of the Nagorny-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan to return to their homes of origin and to restore normal life and peaceful intercommunal coexistence in the region. Azerbaijan is ready to provide a high level of self-rule for the entire Azerbaijani and Armenian population of the Nagorno-Karabakh region of Azerbaijan through a peaceful, democratic and legal process, with the direct participation and consent of both communities of the region.

It is apparent that allegations made by the Armenian Foreign Minister underscore the need to increase awareness at the United Nations about the situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. For example, the United Nations should know the truth as to who is who: who is the aggressor and who is the victim of aggression. Azerbaijan will utilize all available means and mechanisms to that end.

In that process, we count on the support and understanding of the Assembly, as it is only through exposing, condemning and putting an end to the morally bankrupt strategy of glorifying occupation as a national cause that we can eliminate the need for hatred and contempt and pave the way for lasting peace and prosperity in our region.

Ms. Doláková (Czech Republic): Let me just briefly comment on what the representative of Cuba said moments ago.

The statement this morning by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic merely stated obvious facts. We cannot but regret such an overreaction to it. It is our sincere hope that the international system for the protection of human rights will become stronger and enjoy full international cooperation. At the same time, we continue to be prepared to discuss — at the appropriate forums and in an open and constructive manner — any matter of substance related to the alleged violations of human rights in our country.

Mr. Amorós Núñez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Following the logic used by the delegation of the Czech Republic, we would like to use our right of reply to say that those who have come here as medieval inquisitors to judge us have failed to mention their own sins and are pretending to be immune from such failings. They are minimizing the flagrant violations of every sort of human right committed on their territory, thereby making themselves complicit in the massive violations of human rights perpetrated by their ally and master in many parts of the world. That is the Cuban delegation's impression as regards what was said this morning by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic as well as what has just been said by that country's representative.

We understand that the Government of the Czech Republic cannot talk about the systematic torture taking place in the jails of the illegally occupied Guantánamo naval base, in the prisons of Afghanistan or in Iraq. We know it cannot refer to the transfer of detainees through covert flights for the purpose of torture in areas near its country. We can understand why they do not mention those and other flagrant violations of human rights. They cannot do it, quite simply, for fear of their great master and because of their explicit policy of complicity with that master.

What lessons is that steward, or domestic servant, trying to impart to us — with all due respect to those professions? The behaviour of the Czech Republic in this instance, as has just been illustrated by that country's representative, is a classic case of double standards and hypocrisy. Although we do not want to delve into the many things the Czech Government is itself hiding, there is nevertheless reason to wonder why in his statement this morning the Czech Minister did not tell us about the terrible situation of hundreds of thousands of Roma people who are subject to blatant discrimination in their country and who experience disproportionately high levels of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and ethnic violence. Why did they not talk about the many instances in which members of that minority are beaten by members of the ethnic majority, with complete impunity?

If there is indeed a desire for cooperation in the area of human rights, I would have thought it important for the representatives of the Czech Republic to mention such matters to us. Why do they not tell us about the rampant corruption in that country, as a result of which the Prime Minister was recently forced to resign? By contrast, corruption has been permanently eradicated from institutional life in Cuba. Why did they not tell us about police brutality in that country, or the growing increase in racism, discrimination, xenophobia and neo-fascist groups? If there were such a great desire for cooperation and dialogue on those subjects, why were those matters not mentioned? What moral standing do they who ask us to be accountable have when they themselves have so much to overcome and,

in their eagerness to serve as accomplices, are silent about the grave violations of human rights of their masters? In fact, not only are they silent about them, they justify and support such actions.

We in Cuba long ago learned to place dignity high on the list of priorities. Cuba will never silence its voice. We will always support those who do not give in and who stand up for the importance of ideas and principles — unlike the puppets, lackeys and handmaidens of the Government of the Czech Republic.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 8?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.